

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
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AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 0444

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJ: BHUTTO OUSTS QAIYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE MINISTERS FROM
FEDERAL CABINET

1. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO JANUARY 12 FORCED THE RESIGNATIONS OF THE FEDERAL CABINET'S TWO QAIYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE (QML) MEMBERS, HOME MINISTER ABDUL QAIYUM KHAN, THE PARTY'S PRESIDENT, AND MINISTER OF FUEL, POWER, AND NATURAL RESOURCES YUSUF KHATTAK. IN A LETTER WHICH WAS LATER PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS, THE PM HAD WRITTEN TO QAIYUM: "THE PROPOSALS MADE BY YOU TO ME ON THE QUESTION OF YOUR PARTY'S UNDERSTANDING WITH MY PARTY IN THE FORTHCOMING GENERAL ELECTIONS WERE DISCUSSED BY ME TODAY WITH THE CABINET MEMBERS OF MY PARTY. THE VIEW WAS THAT YOUR PROPOSALS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED. ACCORDINGLY, I WOULD CALL ON YOU AND MR. MOHD. YUSUF KHATTAK TO SUBMIT YOUR RESIGNATIONS FROM THE FEDERAL CABINET." THE TWO MINISTERS RESIGNED SOON AFTER RECEIVING BHUTTO'S LETTER.

2. AS SEEN FROM ISLAMABAD, THE OUSTER OF QAIYUM AND KHATTAK,
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AND THE BREAKUP OF THE PPP-QML ALLIANCE WHICH IT INVOLVES WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE TO THE MANY WITHIN THE QML AND OUTSIDE IT WHO HAVE LONG WARNED THAT THE PARTY AND ITS LEADERS WOULD SUFFER JUST SUCH A FATE UNLESS THEY BROKE WITH BHUTTO, REESTABLISHED THEIR INDEPENDENT STANDING, AND PREPARED TO CONTEST THE ELECTIONS AS OPPOSITIONISTS. OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS THE PARTY'S STRENGTH IN ITS NWFP BASE HAS BEEN

STEADILY ERODED BY DEFECTIONS TO THE PPP OBVIOUSLY ENGINEERED WITH THE PM'S BLESSING, AND REWARDED BY HIM. (THE LAST QML PROVINCIAL MINISTER, WHO QUIT THE PARTY A FEW WEEKS AGO, ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY THAT HE TOO WAS JOINING THE PPP AS HAD BEEN WIDELY EXPECTED.) QAIYUM, UNABLE TO PREVENT THIS, HAD BEEN EQUALLY UNABLE TO BRING HIMSELF TO PART WITH AUTHORITY, AND HAD CONFINED HIS PROTESTS TO OCCASIONAL THREATENING STATEMENTS. HIS POWER TO BARGAIN WITH HIS SENIOR PPP PARTNER FOR THE DIVISION OF NOMINATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL AND NWFP PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES IN THE ELECTION NOW AT HAND WAS DRASTICALLY REDUCED BY THE QML'S LOSS OF SUPPORT TO THE PPP. IT WAS PROBABLY DAMAGED FURTHER BY A LIKELY SURMISE ON BHUTTO'S PART THAT THE QAIYUM GROUP'S ABILITY AT THIS LATE STAGE TO RESUME A CREDIBLE INDEPENDENT ROLE WAS MUCH IMPAIRED BY ITS LONG AND WILLING PARTICIPATION IN HIS GOVERNMENT. THE PM OBVIOUSLY FELT HIMSELF ABLE BRUSQUELY TO REJECT QAIYUM'S DEMANDS, BREAK OFF NEGOTIATIONS, AND DUMP HIM, KHATTAK, AND THE QML ITSELF.

3. JUST WHAT ROLE THE OLD AND INFIRM QAIYUM AND THE QML WILL NOW PLAY IN THE ELECTION IS NOT CLEAR. HE TOLD THE PRESS YESTERDAY THAT THE PARTY WILL "FULLY PARTICIPATE" IN THE CONTEST, BUT DECLINED TO COMMENT ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATING WITH THE NEWLY FORMED OPPOSITIONIST PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE. THERE IS LIKELY TO BE OPPOSITION WITHIN THE ALLIANCE ITSELF TO ANY EFFORT ON HIS PART TO ESTABLISH LINKS WITH IT. THE FACT THAT THE QML WAS FOR FIVE YEARS A LOYAL JUNIOR PARTNER TO THE PPP UNTIL IT WAS BOOTED OUT, ITS MUCH REDUCED STRENGTH, AND THE PERSONAL ANTAGONISM SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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OPPOSITION LEADERS FEEL TOWARD QAIYUM WILL BE DAUNTING TO THOSE IN ALLIANCE RANKS WHO MAY ARGUE THAT IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST BHUTTO ANY VOLUNTEER IS WELCOME.

4. CONSULATE PESHAWAR REPORTS THAT THE BHUTTO-QAIYUM BREAK CAME AS NO SURPRISE THERE. THE CONSULATE'S QML CONTACTS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE BEEN URGING QAIYUM TO QUIT HIS ALLIANCE WITH THE PM, HAVE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT, DESPITE THE WAY IT CAME ABOUT. CONSULATE SOURCES SEEM AS UNCERTAIN AS WE ARE ABOUT WHAT QAIYUM WILL DO NEXT. WE SHOULD HAVE FURTHER COMMENTS ON MONDAY FOLLOWING POL COUNSELOR'S VISIT TO PESHAWAR.
BYROADE

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
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